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Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Letter dated 17 June 1999 from the Acting Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" to the President of the Economic and Social Council

You will recall that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 52/100 of 12 December 1997 and 52/231 of 4 June 1998, decided to convene a special session in the year 2000 to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, and to consider further actions and initiatives. The Assembly also decided that the Commission on the Status of Women would serve as the preparatory committee for the special session, open to the participation of all States Members of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies, in accordance with the established practice of the Assembly.

With the expanded participation of all States, the preparatory committee at its second session elected its Bureau on 15 March 1999, with Ms. Irma Engelbrecht (South Africa) as its Chairperson. In March, Ms. Engelbrecht chaired the second session of the preparatory committee, the report of which will be before the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 in July.

As part of its forward planning, the Bureau of the preparatory committee decided to convene informal consultations during the week of 14 June, to discuss the proposed outcome of the special session, including the drafting of a possible political statement.

On Friday, 11 June 1999, the Government of South Africa informed the Secretary-General that Ms. Engelbrecht was no longer able to carry out her functions as Chairperson.

The Bureau of the preparatory committee met on Monday, 14 June, and decided that it was essential to maintain its programme of informal consultations during the week of 14

* E/1999/100 and Add.1.

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June, even in the absence of its Chairperson. It designated me, as a Vice-Chairperson of the preparatory committee, to preside over the informal consultations as Acting Chairperson. At the same time, it recognized the importance of electing a new Chairperson as soon as possible, noting that it was undesirable to await the final session of the preparatory committee in March 2000, in light of the fact that the special session would be convened from 5 to 9 June 2000.

For that reason, the Bureau has asked me to request from the Economic and Social Council authorization for the preparatory committee to hold a one-day formal meeting during the week of 28 June 1999 for the sole purpose of electing a new Chairperson as well as two Vice-Chairpersons from the Group of Asian States.

I should therefore be grateful if you could put this request to the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council when it meets on Friday, 18 June, for endorsement by the Council when it meets on 23 June. If the Council should approve the holding of that brief meeting, this would enable the preparatory committee to continue with its programme of informal consultations, thereby marking progress towards the conclusion of negotiations in March 2000 on the final political documents to be submitted to the special session.

(*Signed*) Patricia **Flor**
Acting Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women
acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the
General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality,
development and peace in the twenty-first century"